THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

October/November 2016 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

The Value of Work

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

As one of seven kids, who had chores around the house, sold newspapers, Christmas cards, and seeds door-to-door, and then worked in restaurants 60 hours a week or more in the summertime, I saw myself as a very hard worker, but a single day laboring alongside Phil Berrigan put me in my place. The renowned anti-war activist was in his late 50's and I was only 22 when I joined him in the Baltimore heat and humidity for a nine-hour day house painting. After I hoped we were finished, Phil cleaned the brushes and asked me to join him chopping wood. When I was so exhausted I could barely lift the ax, Phil gave a belly laugh and roared, "You aren't tired, are you?"

As someone who grew up during the Great Depression in a German-Irish immigrant family, fought in World War II, and then went to Holy Cross College on the GI Bill, Phil understood the value of work. To him and his peers, nothing came cheap. By my time, what passed for privation was living in a family which wore hand-me-downs, carried bag lunches to school, and vacationed in tents instead of hotels. I had no familiarity with missing meals, growing my own food, having to heat and cook with wood, or having people come to our back door offering to work for food.

But this morning, National Public Radio reported that the average American child receives $15 a week from his or her parents for absolutely no work — not for washing dishes, taking out the trash, cutting the lawn, shoveling snow — for nothing.

On the other end of the economic spectrum, it is still common for many children to work back-breaking hours in sweat shops or on farms.

Work, especially physical labor, can be dehumanizing, mind-numbing oppression, but the absence of it divorces us from the truth that what we consume is the work of someone's hands. Americans are fast becoming a society not unlike the one imagined by HG Wells in his book, *The Time Traveler*, a world where indolent and effete white people lolly on the Earth's surface while burly, dark-skinned

Ade Bethune

slaves labor constantly below ground. Contrary to the notion that liberation from physical labor frees humanity to devote itself to higher intellectual, artistic, and humanitarian enterprises, Well's top-siders became illiterate, sloppy, and selfish. They are inevitably doomed to be overwhelmed by their oppressed cousins. If you think that's fantastical, recall that only two generations ago, it was common for Americans to be able to recite from memory reams of poetry, literature, and lines from historical figures, while many people today limit their reading to tweets.

Francesco Bernadone grew up with every luxury, and servants who did all the physical work. And yet, he was not content. He felt empty, and the richer he became, the emptier he felt, until his religious conversion transformed him into a hard physical worker, servant of the poor, and minister to lepers. In those unlikely

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Flag Idolatry

by Patrick O'Neill

Editor's Note: The author and his wife, Mary Rider, are co-founders of the Father Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House in Garner, North Carolina. Patrick is also a sports reporter whose work has appeared in 30 national publications.

When San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick decided not to stand and sing the national anthem at NFL games as a protest of police killings of African-Americans, I was heartened by his courage, thinking his act would be dismissed as un-American, and would likely lead to his career being cut short.

The initial reaction of some white people burning Kaepernick's jersey (conjuring up images of KKK cross burnings) was scary, but the positives have been on display as well, with a sprinkling of other athletes joining Kaepernick in his protest, and others speaking up for him.

Still, while Kaepernick's refusal to stand and sing the national anthem has opened up a very important national conversation, I am afraid most people are not going deep enough in trying to decipher these very complex issues, which have many layers that go far beyond patriotic ritual, and even beyond the "Black Lives Matter" movement.

Liberals and First Amendment folks say, "Of course Kaepernick has the right to refuse to stand, but ..."

"...(B)ut I love the flag," said Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson. Even Kaepernick repeats over and over that his protest should NOT be construed as anti-American or unpatriotic.

Most people who grew up in the United States have been brainwashed to believe in "American Exceptionalism," which is

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Flag Idolatry

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bolstered by a Pavlovian response to the flag and all things patriotic. Most children are introduced to the pledge of allegiance in preschool. The pledge is a prayer-like ritual that usually indoctrinates children to life-long flag idolatry. Such early indoctrination stifles critical thinking, and when an indoctrinated person sees a flag they will often associate something positive with that image.

Whenever a politician speaks on camera, a flag is visible as a background prop, and even our churches proudly fly old glory – both on the altar and on church grounds. "God and country," is the mantra of the brainwashed, as if U.S. imperialism, militarism, and patriotism are part and parcel of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, those who hold a different view than the masses, those who engage in Kaepernick-like behavior, are suspect. Subsequently, dissent becomes abhorrent behavior that should be ignored, vehemently opposed, or crushed. The vitriolic comments on line about Kaepernick can be compared to what people have said about Osama bin Laden.

To think or behave otherwise labels a person not only unpatriotic, but ungodly as well. Americans have demonstrated time and again a lack of intellectual curiosity, which naturally leads to disinterest in what is true.

In our culture, flag idolatry manifests itself in simple slogans like: "People died for the flag. We should respect it." Is human life not worth far more than a piece of clothe? Did anyone actually die for a flag? Or, rather, isn't the flag what we wrap our war-making in so we can justify the slaughter of the innocents, including our own citizens whom we sacrifice as canon fodder?

My questions are: "Why does anyone sing the national anthem?" And, "Why does anyone pledge allegiance to the U.S. flag?"

Children pledging allegiance to the U.S. flag in 1942

For example, why would a Native American, whose ancestors were tormented, killed, and displaced by white colonists, want to partake of a national loyalty oath? Why would an African American, whose descendants were kidnapped and brought to the "New World" as slaves, want to pledge allegiance to United States of America? Why would a Japanese American, whose parents and grandparents were rounded up and placed in internment camps during World War II want to sing about the "land of the free?" And why would Latino immigrants, who are called "illegal" or worse, want to gaze lovingly at the U.S. flag?

As Catholic Workers, my wife, Mary Rider, and I have raised our children to love God and reject idolatry. My children have refused to recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag in school, and they have often paid a price for that, facing harassment from both fellow students as well as teachers. Our family stands opposed to a national loyalty oath. We do not resonate with the words "one nation under God" (whose god?) or believe that ours is a nation of "liberty and justice for all."

General public reaction to any person who does not march lockstep in support of flag idolatry is nothing short of mob behavior. Non-conformers are called names, accused of disrespecting the military, and harassed.

Recently, incumbent North Carolina Senator Richard Burr's re-election campaign announced it will take Democratic challenger Deborah Ross to task because, when she was state director of the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina, Ross opposed amending the U.S. Constitution to ban flag burning. Thankfully, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled flag-burning is in fact a form of "free speech."

I think Jesse Jackson said it best in his opposition to criminalizing flag burning: "We are a nation of symbol over substance," Jackson said.

As much as the masses would like everyone in this "free" nation to follow the mob in unanimity of thought, I say, "No, thanks." As a Catholic pacifist, I can say with confidence: "Jesus was never on the side of the mob." I pledge my allegiance to Jesus and to justice, not to any flag or anthem of the state. Ω

Editor's Note: Led by Doherty High junior defensive back Michael Oppong, a number of Worcester football players and fans now take a knee when the national anthem is played before games.

Water Is Life

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Praised to You, My Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious, and pure. –St. Francis

In this autumn of extreme political divisions and absurdities, a great convening occurs on the banks of the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers in North Dakota. Each day brings new reports of widening solidarity with the Sioux peoples in their opposition to the construction of a 3.8 billion dollar oil pipeline. If built, the 1,200-mile pipeline would daily transport 570,000 barrels of crude oil frakked from North Dakota's Brakken shale fields to Illinois, where connecting lines would pump the black ooze to refineries in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is slated to cross the Missouri River, half a mile north of Standing Rock Reservation, home to a Sioux tribe. The route cuts through sacred sites on the tribe's ancestral lands. Should the line spring a leak, it would contaminate the water supply for Standing Rock's inhabitants and millions of people living downstream.

Mni Wiconi (water is life) has become the slogan for this movement which began last spring when Sioux youth ran relay 2,000 miles from North Dakota to Washington D.C. to tell the president the pipeline must be stopped. The mainstream media largely ignored the early protests — the arrests of thirty activists in August; the private security guards unleashing attack dogs on men, women, and children who entered a construction zone in September to block bulldozers digging for the pipeline.

National and international attention has since increased, as has support from activists and celebrities around the world. But the fight against the DAPL is primarily an indigenous movement and a spiritual one at that. Native Americans representing 280 tribes, some from as far away as Latin America, have flocked to the two protest camps along the banks of the Cannonball in a gathering the *New York Times* described as "the largest, most diverse tribal action in at least a century."

After visiting the protest site in early September, Rebecca Solnit wrote in *The Guardian,* "In the central circle of the camp, some words and ideas recurred: that peace and prayer were the means here, that being humble mattered, that ancestors mattered, that this was nonviolent."

Who cannot take heart in this outpouring of courage and wisdom from seemingly forgotten and powerless peoples? Like so many campaigns of nonviolent resistance, this one serves as exposé for the common good, bringing to light historical injustices and present-day hazards.

Over the decades, the US government has usurped Sioux territories in North Dakota in violation of treaties. This squeezing of a people onto reservations has not altered their memory or reverence for lands once inhabited. Dakota Access originally considered routing its pipeline near Bismarck, North Dakota's predominantly white capital, but opted to cross the Missouri River farther south, near Standing Rock, when concerns for the city's water supply were raised.

It's a familiar pattern of treatment for those who have endured colonial rule. The Palestinian Youth Movement – US Branch was quick to express solidarity with Standing Rock Sioux: "From seizure of land to reservations, from boarding schools to massacres, the state has done everything in its power to erase and eradicate the First Nation peoples. Yet, they are still with us today, and they continue to resist. Protecting their land, people, and future generations from the DAPL is testament to their strength and resilience."

While the fight against the DAPL involves particular issues of justice for indigenous people, it is also a universal struggle. Water is vital to all living beings. The Missouri, which Native Americans refer to as "Heart River," is the longest river in the US. Any pollution caused by a spill from the DAPL would not only impact the Sioux reservation but also "a huge swathe of the agriculture and residents at the center of the continent," writes Solnit.

Our quest for energy independence from foreign oil has resulted in what native and environmental activist Winona LaDuke calls the "re-plumbing" of the continent with new pipelines, something we do not need. Energy Transfer Partners, the Texas-based parent company of DAPL argues that underground transport of crude oil is safer than shipping it via trucks and trains through Americans towns and cities. (In researching this story, I was surprised to learn of the contamination, fires, and deaths from tipped over trucks and cargo trains– another reminder of the "price" of oil.) Yet, as journalist William Brangham points out, the 2.5 million miles of existing pipelines across the continent "*do* sometimes leak and rupture. And when they do, they spill far more than what a train can carry."

On September 9, the US government temporarily ordered a halt to the construction of the DAPL near Standing Rock. It's a significant victory for those who have known many defeats. The fight, however, is not over. The order applies only to federal land. Construction on the DAPL continues elsewhere — Iowa's governor is enthusiastic for it — as does the opposition. There are reports the Ojibway are building more permanent shelters at the protest camps in anticipation of the North Dakota winter. Ω

Work

(Continued from Page 1)

pursuits, coupled with daily prayer, Francesco found perfect joy. He would go on to be proclaimed the most popular saint of all time, the patron of the current pope and our Catholic Worker community.

So devoted to work was Saint Francis that in his Last Will and Testament, he wrote: "*I used to work with my hands, and I still desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my brothers give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire of receiving wages for their work but as an example and in order to avoid idleness. And when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, seeking alms from door to door.*"

Following his lead, here at Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker, we have a cottage industry called the Bread Not Bombs Bakery. Two days each week, we get up early to bake breads, muffins, and swirls which we offer at parishes for anything a customer wants to give. This modest effort reminds us of those who get up before the sun seven days a week. It also provides many of our needs.

Each Friday, I go to Saint Joseph's Trappist Abbey in Spencer, where Brother Jude Corden gives us food to use and share with neighbors. Following the guidance of Saint Benedict, the Trappists do not rely on donations to support themselves. Every abbey has to be self-supporting through work. The monks of Saint Joseph's weave liturgical vestments, make jams and jellies, and brew beer. Other monasteries make cheeses, bake breads, or grow vegetables. While the monks could make a good argument that getting up at 3 in the morning to offer the first of five prayers each day is more than enough work, they understand that physical work and prayer go hand in hand.

Conservative politicians like to castigate the poor as lazy people who live high on the hog off the sweat of tax payers. My thirty-two years experience with the poor has revealed a more complex picture. Many poor people are genuinely unable to hold down jobs due to physical or mental disability, addiction, age, or responsibility for children. These folks will always need support to survive. Many other poor folks are under-employed at non-living wages. And then, there are poor people who yearn to work and cannot find it. Lastly, there are those who have no experience of honest labor and aspire to nothing more than cheap public housing and other assistance. But all four groups, even the disabled, suffer a loss of dignity from the complete absence of meaningful work. Conservatives like to require those on welfare to work, but offer little to no funding to create jobs.

Li Qun

Considering that each and every human being is created by God with unique gifts, it is a supreme waste to not make an effort to discover and then utilize those gifts to improve life for all of society. During the Great Depression, government-funded programs, like the Civilian Conservation Corps, built national parks and completed public works, including murals, that serve us all to this day. Experts say that the US infrastructure is long overdue for repair. Many schools are without art, music, and physical education teachers. Classes are too large with insufficient numbers of teacher's aides. Branch libraries are closed. Pools and beaches are missing life guards. Seniors are missing home visitors. Solar panels, wind turbines, and small hydro-electric projects need to be built. And what American wouldn't love to see the day return when there were enough medical professionals to provide personal and affordable medical care at home?

This fall, I am the cross country coach at Worcester's South High with more than 40 runners on my team and no funds for an assistant coach. Ideally, it would take two assistants to accommodate the different abilities and needs of my runners.

There is no shortage of needed and creative work. None of these efforts need be make-work. Each task should be vital, well-paid, and demanding. Those who are lazy and do not want to work, need to be let go until the desire for necessities and dignity inspires them to work earnestly. I don't do any student a favor by keeping them on my cross country team if they do not make an effort to run. Not everyone can go the same speed, but anyone who tries their best deserves the same reward, the same wage that Jesus promises to those who work any length of the day.

Dorothy Day was wont to say during the Great Depression, "There's plenty of work. There's just no wages." That's still true of the Catholic Worker movement. We are able to serve the poor and promote peace at home and abroad largely because our members volunteer their labor. In by-gone days, religious communities made ends meet at schools, hospitals, and orphanages because nuns, brothers, and priests worked for room and board. With the decline in their numbers and the decision to pay them like their secular peers, costs at Catholic institutions are now as high as any other. This puts either a higher price tag on service or crimps it severely.

Our Catholic Worker community functions on less per year than many social services pay a single administrator. Offering every community member a wage sufficient to support them in independent housing, et al, would force us to spend the bulk of our time fund raising. But is it fair for us to challenge the government and private businesses to pay living wages and create sufficient jobs for everyone who wants to work? Given that industry and the state set aside vast sums for administration, insurance, bureaucracy, profit, and harmful enterprises like the military, I think it is reasonable for society to ask more from them.

Hard work, like hard running, is rewarding. We appreciate small things,

like a glass of cold water or a chance to sit down for a while so much more after a hard effort.

Years ago, during a visit to an ashram in India, a Hindu holy man asked me what I do for a living. I told him that I shelter the homeless and work for peace. He persisted, "But what do you do?" "I write articles. I go to protests. I give talks." Even more forcefully, he asked, "Not those things, I mean what do you create with your hands?" "Well," I replied, "Two days a week, I bake bread." "Ah," he smiled, "then you are a baker."

Especially as machines carry out more and more tasks, it remains valuable, perhaps even vital, for each of us to spend some of our time doing physical work. Ω

Hands!

by Elena Sandu

I see many hands,
Watching fingers
Graciously playing
piano, flute, or harps
Writing, molding, painting
sounds and colors
to brighten and lighten every heart.
Those arts are
to become a special present
for those similar fingers,
similar hands of our parents,
grandparents, or grandgrands....
Hands taking so much pride
in building, feeding, cleaning,
caring in any way they could
for those inspired ones,
for our earth.
Those working hands–
the finest souls
could never scream out their
happiness or pain
because the lack of time
to even catch a breath.
But they too expressed themselves
and did their best, oh yes,
through work,
love and kindness,
never stopped to spread.
Truth: The Hard Workers!
are Masters of the World!
Let's recognise and value them
at Real price. Ω

A Brave Stand for Peace

Editor's Note: The following letter was written by Ben Salmon to US President Woodrow Wilson on June 5, 1917. Salmon was one of only four American Catholics who refused to fight in the First World War. For his anti-war stand, he was initially sentenced to death and then re-sentenced to 25 years hard labor. During his ordeal, Catholic priests refused him the Sacraments. With the help of the American Civil Liberties Union, he was released on November 26, 1920. There is now a growing campaign to have him declared a saint. For more information, go to www.bensalmon.org.

My Dear Mr. Wilson,

Complying with your edict, I registered today. Your mandate was autocratic, and contrary to the Constitution, nevertheless, acquiescence caused injustice against no one but myself, consequently, I submitted. But, I must now tell you that I refuse to submit to conscription.

Regardless of nationality, all men are my brothers. God is "our Father who art in heaven." The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is unconditional and inexorable.

If the parent orders the child to do wrong, the child should disobey. If the State commands the subject to violate God's law, the subject should ignore the State. Man is anterior to the State, and God is supreme.

Both by precept and example, the lowly Nazarene taught us the doctrine of non-resistance, and so convinced was He of the soundness of that doctrine that He sealed His belief with death on the cross. The great mass of the people still adhere to Christ's teachings against war, regardless of the fact that cardinals, priests, and ministers have repudiated the Christian ideal and bowed to the god of expediency.

There are many ways to avoid war. Now that you are in it, there are many ways to get out of it without sacrificing, or threatening to sacrifice, a single life. Solution of the problem, without breaking the commandments of God, is merely a question of desire and determination.

Aside from right or wrong, why concern ourselves about German injustice while unmindful of the disorder of our own house? In America, millions of impoverished citizens vainly send forth their mute appeal for justice. Their supplications are answered with greater tyranny, renewed iniquities, and a further disregard of their rights and their liberties. Show me any German cruelty that can outdo the horror of the massacre of women and children in the tent colony at Ludlow! And, the underlying cause of the Ludlow tragedy manifests itself daily throughout the length and breadth of this land of liberty, although it is only when given spontaneous expression that we even notice the misery and sorrow and seething despair that is slowly eating out the heart of our boasted civilization in America. Why not correct the wrongs at home? "Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye." —St. Luke, vi-42.

I am not an alien sympathizer. I was born in Denver, of Canadian-American parents, and I love America. This letter is not written in a contumelious spirit. But, when human law conflicts with Divine law, my duty is clear.

Conscience, my infallible guide, impels me to tell you that prison, or death, or both, are infinitely preferable to joining any branch of the army, and contributing, either directly or indirectly, to the death of my fellow workingmen.

I voted for you and worked for your election in 1916, and still have faith in you. Hopeful that you may yet see the right and have the courage to follow it, I am sincerely yours,

Ben J. Salmon

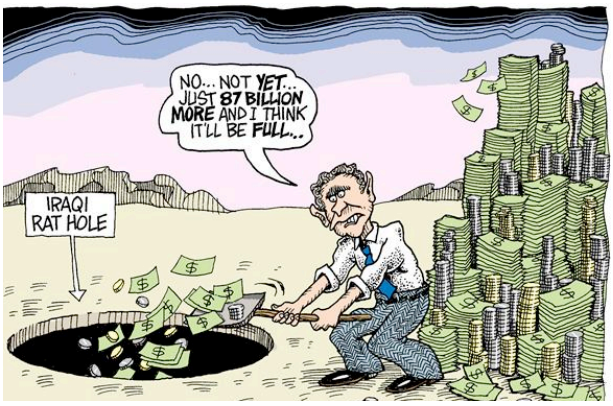
Cost of Wars Soaring

by Bonnie Kristian

Editor's Note: The following article appeared on AOL on September 19, 2016.

Back in 2013, a Harvard University study determined the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan would together cost American taxpayers $4 to $6 trillion over the coming decades.

That figure, calculated after 2011's "end" of the war in Iraq and before 2014's "end" of combat operations in Afghanistan, included both money spent on each conflict to date and long-term medical expenses for the thousands of U.S. soldiers who suffered physical and/or mental injuries as a result of their time in combat....



2003 cartoon by Monte Wolverton

But that was in 2013, and since then both wars didn't exactly end. Instead, we got ISIS and an apparently endless quagmire, with each of these conflicts being described as "generational" commitments that America will be stuck with for years to come.

Needless to say, the costs have risen. And we now have hard figures on just how much. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost U.S. taxpayers nearly $5 trillion so far, and that total could rise even higher in the years to come, according to new calculations released by independent researchers at Brown University last week.

That total includes not only the costs of equipment and personnel in those countries, but also State Department spending to help local populations, Department of Homeland Security spending linked to the wars, and Department of Veterans Affairs services that expanded as troops returned home.

The exact tally is $4.79 trillion, and the study author, Neta C. Crawford, notes that's really an understatement of our long-term obligations, because it doesn't take into account interest on war debt. She calculates that interest payments alone will hit $7.3 trillion by 2053.

So if we add in the interest costs the wars generate (which I think is fair), we're looking at $12.09 trillion spent on these two wars by 2053—and that's what it would be if we actually ended both wars at the end of 2017, as Crawford's calculation only includes direct war spending through the end of next year. In reality, it seems likely that American intervention will continue in both countries past next December, which means even $12.09 trillion is an undercounting of what these wars will cost.

Of course, calculable expenditures can never account for the many other ways these interminable, counterproductive wars have cost the United States and Iraq and Afghanistan themselves. "A full accounting of any war's burdens cannot be placed in columns on a ledger," Crawford writes. "From the civilians harmed or displaced by violence, to the soldiers killed and wounded, to the children who play years later on roads and fields sown with improvised explosive devices and cluster bombs, no set of numbers can convey the human toll of the wars."

Sadly, neither the human nor financial costs should surprise us. War is always defined by "its brutality, its futility, its stupidity," as general and President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously said, and it is far from immune to the wasteful spending typical of large-scale federal projects. We cannot avoid repeating this deadly, exacting toll on our country until we learn both lessons well. Ω

From Thérèse With Love

by Matthew Walton

Editor's Note: The author is a Catholic Worker in Manawatu, New Zealand. He wrote this poem after a tour of the bones of Saint Thérèse in 2005. Also known as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and The Little Flower, she was born 1897. Her feast day is October 1. Dorothy Day admired her so much, she wrote a biography of Saint Thérèse, which is still in print.

From fields of France,
From her Father's house,
Came light, came love,
Came a child
with the hidden virtues of the rose,
Petal by petal unpetalling our hearts.

A living word subsumed,
In communion consumed
In silent sacrifice of love,
Returning bringing good
To the ever-present now.

Resonance of Christ gracing
Gentle breeze from the heights of Carmel,
Stirring wastelands to fecundity
That eyes may see –
Jonquils may bloom,
That ears may hear –
And desert flowers revive. Ω

Letters

Greetings,
I appreciate the articles in *The Catholic Radical*. Always something to challenge me. I liked Scott's quote from 1988 — especially the word "Providence"!

I hope you had a chance to read Patrick Jordan's book: *Dorothy Day: Love in Action*.

I like this quote, "You'll never plow a field by turning it over in your mind."

Sister Betty Donoghue
Saint Mary-in-the-Woods, Indiana

Hello Scott,
Despite the fact that I put down *Nothing Is Impossible* many times, I must say that your book is one of the few I've read recently that made me laugh aloud. With an easy willingness to laugh at yourself, you weaved readers through time in a tale of surviving your Uncle Bob's "candy ass" taunts to becoming a hopelessly lovesick teenager turned homewrecker, to marching as a sad clown in war zones to basically LARPING (live actions role play) with your firstborn on Worcester's streets. Even with great playfulness and ludicrous risk-taking, it is clear that you live with compassion and act always to please the God of peace. For being a semi-ordinary dude who likes to talk trash before 5Ks and exhibits more ridiculous antics than a hungry child, your story is amazing. You gave credit to others where credit was due and showed the beauty of following one's moral conscience even in great danger

As a kid in college trying to figure it out, I am glad that I spent time at the table of Saints Francis and Thérèse Catholic Worker. I will not forget the guests I met, the food I helped cook, or the conversations that I shared with you and Claire. This book will stay with me in times where I have doubt that things will work out. You inspire me to embrace the call for peace and justice in this wild world and leave my candy ass fears behind.

Thank you for the service of penning your adventures!

Louisa Pavlik
Plainfield, Illinois

Thomas Nast

Don't wait until Santa runs out of Scott Schaeffer-Duffy's book

Nothing Is Impossible: Stories from the Life of a Catholic Worker

Send $24.95 to
52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610
and
get a wonderful Christmas gift
to give or receive

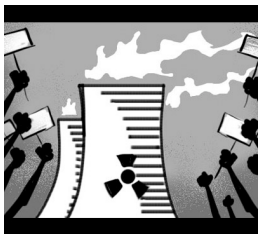
Catholic Worker Calendar

October 5 & 19, November 9 — Evening Prayer: Join us in prayer and Taize chant at 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

October 22 — Pax Christi State Assemby- Ending the Nuclear Nightmare/ Faithful Witnesses and Non-Violent Strategies: Come hear Marie Dennis, a leader of Catholics to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and Professor Jonathan Alan King of MIT of Massachusetts Peace Action's Nuclear Disarmament Working Group. 9 A.M.- 3 P.M., Saint Susanna's Parish, 262 Needham Street, Dedham, MA, $40 donation at the door, $35 in advance, scholarships available. For more information: paxchristima@gmail.com

October 15 & November 19 — Reversing the Gun Culture Vigil: Join us opposite the entrance to the The Gun Parlor shooting range. 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

October 23 & November 3 — POWER STRUGGLE: Filmed over five years,



this feature-length documentary follows the unfolding drama as citizen activists and elected officials - alarmed at increasing safety violations - took on the federal government and one of the biggest nuclear power companies in America to call for the closure of the reactor when its original 40-year license expires. Directed by Robbie Leppzer in association with HBO. 2 P.M. at the Academy of Music Theatre in Northampton, MA on October 23 and at 7 P.M. at the Latchis Theatre in Brattleboro, VT on November 3. For more information: www.PowerStruggleMovie.com.

November 2 — Meditation and Progressive Activism: Please come to a talk given by Will Raymond, author of *The Simple Path of Holiness* and host of MeditationPractice.com. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Followed by refreshments.

Steve Prince

November 25 — Buy Nothing Day: Buck the consumerist trend. Go to http://www.adbusters.org/bnd/ for more information.

Mason Street Musings

Mid-September brought incursions and malfunctions to Mason Street. A modest gathering of bed bugs appeared in the men's room. Day's later, our internet service slowed to a creeping pace, frustrating the instant communication we have come to assume as our birthright.

These calamities followed a glorious Labor Day weekend celebrating the wedding of our son Patrick to Jun Shepard. I know the psalmist writes of life's highs and lows with poetry and a sense of awe for God's mysterious ways, but Biblical verses were not running through my head during our time of inconveniences.

Hardened warriors, we fight bed bugs the American Way with gusto and overkill. We called out the pesticide man, who arrived yesterday bearing white powder and a silver can filled with a worrisome concoction of chemicals. He donned a ventilator mask, briskly sprayed bedrooms, dusted furniture, and then was off, rendering the upstairs uninhabitable to human and pets alike for several hours.

Over at the Worcester Washmaster – our neighborhood hang-out for dealers and panhandlers – Scott washed a carload of linen and clothes then sterilized everything, even Beatrice's stuffed rabbit, in dryers set on high. When the air upstairs was no longer life-threatening, Rao. and I re-assembled the rooms. We remade beds, rehung curtains, and returned books and photo albums, sealed in black garbage bags, back to their shelves. By 8 P.M., I was lusting for a simple hut on the banks of the Ganges. The bed bugs would be there, of course. They are a fact of life in India, Rao tells me. But I would deal with them the Indian Way, as he described, with a brush of my hand, or fatal squish.

Grace Sliwoski

Rao is an avid reader of wide-ranging knowledge. As we struggled to put on mattress covers, he told me of an op-ed in the *New York Times* by an American journalist who recently returned to the US after 27 years of reporting in Asia. The writer was surprised at the scale and severity of homelessness in San Francisco, an affluent city known for its technological innovations. San Francisco has less than one-tenth Bangkok's population but six times as many homeless people. When the journalist asked a Thai social worker about this difference, she credited it to American obsession with systems.

"Everything here is binary," Rao said, summarizing one of the points in the article. "You are either in the system, or you are not. You're a citizen, or you're not. You have health care, or you don't." Too much of life these days is systematized. Some of that San Francisco technology has contributed to this development which certainly has its merits.

But human relations can never be fully systematized, nor can minds, or hearts. We are just too mysterious. God-bearers harboring the Divine Unknown. Being faithful to the Gospel requires resisting the binary view.

On a recent trip to the Worcester Washmaster, Scott had a vision. Looking around at the beleagured souls slogging laundry from washing machine to dryer, he wondered, "What if these were the only people left in a post-Apoocalyptic world? That man on the cellphone might be a technocrat who helps save us; the woman with hollow eyes, a skilled navigator."

Who knows what gifts lie within the other?

Enrico a guest from the 1980's, is back. The years have whitened his hair and deepened the creases around his grey-blue eyes, but his quirky humor remains intact. "Heard the joke about the rope?" he asked Scott this morning. "Skip it." Blessed autumn, everyone. **Claire**

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